

Iran University of Medical Sciences (IUMS) Has Developed a System Based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Which Can Detect Breast Cancer With 94 Percent Accuracy, the President of IUMS Abdolreza Pazuk Announced

IRAN NEWS

The Iranian Navy on Friday Dispatched a "Combat and Training" Flotilla of Warships From Bandar Abbas to the High Seas for What the Navy Chief Called a Multipronged Mission, as the Flotilla Includes Bushehr and Tunb Warships

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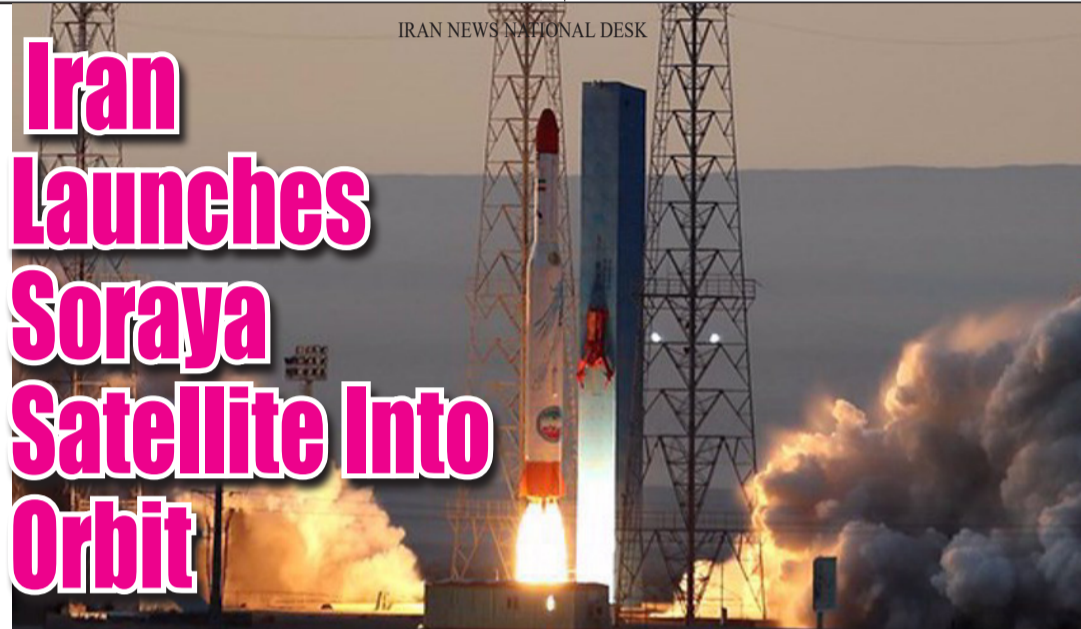
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Four IRGC Advisors Assassinated in Israeli Aggression on Syria



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps says four of its military advisors have been assassinated in an Israeli strike in the Syrian capital. The IRGC said in a statement on Saturday that the advisors were "martyred" along with a number of Syrian forces in the attack in Damascus. The attack targeted a three-story residential building in the city's Mezza neighborhood which houses several diplomatic missions. "Once again, the barbaric and criminal Zionist regime launched an aggression on the city of Damascus, the capital of Syria, and a number of Syrian forces and four military advisors of the Islamic Republic of Iran were martyred during the air raid by the usurper regime's fighter jets," the statement said. Israel frequently targets military positions inside Syria, especially those of resistance fighters, who have played a key role in helping the Syrian army in its fight against the foreign-backed terrorists. The Tel Aviv regime has over the past months carried out airstrikes on various locations in Syria and Lebanon as the illegal entity attempts to expand its aggression against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip to other fronts across the region. Iran maintains an advisory mission in Syria at the request of Damascus with the aim of helping the war-torn Arab country vanquish the foreign-backed militants who have been fighting the democratically-elected Syrian government since 2011. Last month, an Israeli air attack on a suburb of Damascus killed Iranian general Sayyed Razi Mousavi, a longtime IRGC adviser in Syria. Earlier in December, Israel also killed two IRGC military advisors — Mohammad Ali Atee Shoorcheh and Panah Taqizadeh — in an attack in Syria. The IRGC announced in a statement that the two officers were martyred against the backdrop of the relentless savagery of the "fake and child-killing" Israeli regime in Gaza.

Iran Launches Soraya Satellite Into Orbit



TEHRAN - Iran has set a "new" space launch record after successfully launching the Soraya (Sky) satellite to an altitude of 750 kilometers above the earth's surface for the first time. The Aerospace Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) announced on Saturday that the launch of Soraya satellite into orbit was carried out by its domestically-manufactured Qaem 100 satellite carrier. Qaem 100, Iran's first three-stage solid-fueled rocket which can carry up to 100 kilos, placed a research payload with an approximate mass of 50 kg in the orbit in its third test launch. The launch, conducted in the presence of Major General Hossein Salami, IRGC's chief commander, Hassan Salarieh, head of Iranian Space Agency, and Brigadier General Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Division, was reported to have set a "new record" in space launch as this is the first time that Iranian satellite carriers reach the 750 km orbit. According to Fars news agency, the satellite has started sending telemetry data. With the launch of this research satellite, many subsystems developed by the Iranian Space Research Center move to the phase of orbital testing, and the way for the rapid development of Iran's indigenous space industry becomes smoother. The launch is also an important step towards increasing the capability of sending satellites into higher orbits. On 28 October 2005, a Kosmos-3M booster rocket launched Sina-1 that was the joint Iranian Russian Sina-1 project cost US\$15 million, and the launch made Iran the 43rd country to possess its own satellite. But Omid, Iran's first satellite placed into orbit in February 2009 using a domestic launcher, the Safir. Omid was described as a data-processing satellite for research and telecommunications. By the way, Rasad-1 is an imaging satellite that has been built and launched successfully by Iran. The satellite was sent into the 260 kilometers orbit by a Safir rocket launcher on 15 June 2011. It beams back to earth pictures with 150-meter resolution. It decayed from orbit three weeks after launch, on 6 July 2011. Iran in recent decades has shown its capability in making and sending satellites into the space.

Iran's industrial MVA Rises 6.5% in 2022



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in a latest report dubbed International Yearbook of Industrial Statistics 2023, has put the growth of Iran's manufacturing value added (MVA) at 6.5 percent, placing the Islamic Republic above 164 countries worldwide. The report has also put the MVA per capita of the country in 2022 at \$825, while the figure was \$712 in 2021. According to the estimates of this international organization, the share of MVA in Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 was 14.7 percent, while the share of industrial products in the country's total exports this year was 47.7 percent and the share of industrial sector in the country's employment was estimated at 17.4 percent. Based on the UNIDO report, among the countries whose MVA growth is lower than Iran in 2022, Brazil, China, Germany, Japan, Qatar, Russia, and the U.S. can be mentioned. According to this report, industrial activities that were greatly reduced in 2020 under the influence of the coronavirus outbreak had an admirable revival in 2021, and in 2022 we have witnessed the return of the growth trend of the industrial sector to the period before the pandemic. In 2022, the added value of the world's industrial sector grew by 2.3 percent, but could not reach the 3.1 percent growth rate of the world's GDP this year. Industrialized economies saw relatively good industrial growth in 2022. The added value of industrial production in high-income economies grew by 2.9 percent this year, while the figure was six percent for industrializing economies. Iran's industry sector also registered a growth of 5.1 percent in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- June 21, 2023) while the country's total economic growth in the said quarter was 3.4 percent. The data released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) show that the growth rate of the industry sector in the second quarter of the year was also significantly positive.

RGC's Erbil Missile Strike Was Based on Legitimate Defense



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says a missile strike by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on a building in Erbil in Iraq's Kurdistan region was conducted on the grounds of legitimate defense and in line with international law. Amir-Abdollahian said in a phone conversation with his Dutch counterpart Hanke Bruins Slot on Friday that in striking the targets in Erbil, Iran sought to "deal effectively" with terrorism in the region. He said the center of plotting some terrorist attacks in Iran, which killed many innocent Iranian people, was an espionage base in Iraq's Kurdistan. The Iranian minister urged the Netherlands to take an appropriate and effective measure to fight terrorism. The top Iranian diplomat reiterated that Tehran respects Iraq's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Iran, Amir-Abdollahian said, would never compromise on its national security. He rejected a claim by the Netherlands about the death of a Dutch baby in the IRGC attack on Erbil. Amir-Abdollahian said there was no evidence in that regard. Earlier on Friday, the Dutch government summoned the Iranian ambassador claiming that a Dutch child of less than one year of age was killed in the Erbil strike. The IRGC said on January 16 that it had fired barrages of ballistic missiles at Syrian bases of terrorists involved in recent terrorist attacks in Iran, as well as an Israeli espionage center in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. The IRGC said the first missile strike targeted gathering places of commanders and main elements of recent terrorist attacks in the Iranian cities of Kerman and Rask. It said in a later statement that a missile strike had been launched at a main espionage center of the Israeli regime's Mossad spy agency in the Iraqi Kurdistan. The strike totally destroyed the Mossad center, it said. During the phone conversation on Friday, the Dutch foreign minister called on Iran and Iraq to "exercise restraint."

Iran Eyes on Independent States as He Visits Uganda for NAM Summit

TEHRAN (PressTV) - First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber has traveled to Uganda to attend a summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which he described a platform for independent voices and a venue which the international community now attaches great significance to its decisions. Mokhber arrived at Uganda's Entebbe airport on Saturday morning to attend the 19th NAM summit in capital Kampala where he thanked Ugandan authorities for hosting the event and highlighted the great capacities of the Non-Aligned Movement. The summit is held as a non-aligned nation, South Africa, has hauled Israel before the International Criminal Court in the Hague on charge of committing genocide in Gaza and demanded that the UN's top court order an emergency ceasefire. The war, now in its 106th day, has marked a turning point in the colonial relationship between Western philosophy and the rest of the world, where the US and Europeans have stood by and let Israel massacre Palestinians on a daily basis. Addressing the summit, Mokhber said there is need to create a new peace-oriented order with the slogan "security for all, insecurity for no one". Mokhber rejected unilateralism and imperialism, but endorsed resistance against oppression, saying any action taken by the Palestinians to resist by any possible means against occupation is their inherent right. He said that "attempts by the Zionist

regime and its Western supporters to project this legitimate struggle as a terrorist act lack legal authority and is a trick and deception". He called on NAM states to support the end of the Israeli occupation, the return of refugees and a referendum to create a stable and just peace in Palestine and to condemn and stop the killing of the people of Gaza by the Zionist regime. Mokhber also said the unilateral sanctions of the US and some other countries are a clear example of economic terrorism. He said the independent and free nations of the world do not accept force, imposition and humiliation. Upon arrival in Kampala, Mokhber stated that NAM member states can wield enormous influence on international developments, particularly in terms of politics and economy. "The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) projects the voices of world's independent nations. Nowadays, world powers devote great attention to the decisions taken and policies adopted at alliances formed among developing countries," he said. He added, "Among the Islamic Republic of Iran's objectives as to development of international relations is to value multilateralism and actively participate in major regional and internationally inclusive forums like NAM." In addition to delivering a speech at the summit, Mokhber plans to engage in bilateral meetings with some participating countries, notably African ones.



Iran's Oil Revenues Hit \$34b in 9 Months



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Despite the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States against the country, Iran's oil revenues in the first nine months of last year (January to September 2023) reached \$34 billion, accounting for 12% of OPEC member states' total oil income. The International Energy Agency (IEA) in a report put Iran's total oil revenues from January to September 2023 at \$33.9 billion. The oil revenues obtained by the Iranian government came while the country has been under the tough sanctions imposed by Western countries including the United States, the agency reported. The \$34 billion of Iran's oil revenues obtained from January to September 2023 was two times the revenues obtained in 12 months in 2020. According to the estimates of the US Department of Energy, Iran sold only \$17 billion and \$37 billion of crude oil in 2020 and 2021 respectively. The report also put the total revenues obtained by the Iranian government as a result of oil sales in 2022 at over \$54 billion, IRNA reported. The agency put the total oil revenues obtained by 13 OPEC member states from January to September 2023 at \$281.2 billion. According to the mentioned entity, Iran's oil production stood at 2.54 million bpd in 2022. The figures show that total OPEC oil production was 26.89 million bpd in 2023 which shows 630,000 barrels fall year on year. OPEC produced 27.52 million bpd in 2022. This report has put Iran's oil production in the last month of last year at 3.17 million bpd. Iran was the third-largest OPEC producer after Saudi Arabia and Iraq in December 2023. The 330,000-bpd increase in Iran's 2023 oil production indicates that sanctions have been ineffective on Iran's oil industry. Back in June 2023, Bloomberg reported that the production and export of Iranian oil in 2023 reached record highs since the country came under U.S. sanctions more than five years ago. The report published in late June 2023 stated that Iran was shipping the highest amount of crude in almost five years despite U.S. sanctions.

IRAN NEWS



Iran, Vietnam Call for Boosting Economic Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The vice presidents of Iran and Vietnam have underlined the need for expanding and strengthening economic relationships as well as removing banking and monetary hurdles. Iranian Vice President Mohammad Mokhber and his Vietnamese counterpart Vo Thi Anh Xuan held talks on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Kampala, Uganda, on Saturday. Mokhber referred to the historical relationship between Iran and Vietnam as well as existing agreements on agricultural, technical, and engineering sectors, noting that the development of bilateral economic ties is not satisfactory, while these two countries enjoy very good political relations. He emphasized that the private sector is vital in upgrading economic exchanges between the two countries and called for removing monetary and banking obstacles.

Iran Uses All Available Means to Defend Nation, Territorial Integrity



TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian minister of defense has reiterated the country's stance that the recent move to target hostile forces in neighboring countries was 'legitimate' and based on the country's defense doctrine. Commenting on targeting anti-Iran terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) last week, Brigadier General Mohammadreza Ashtiani said on Saturday that, "The Islamic Republic uses all means to defend its territorial integrity and people." He dismissed accusations that Iran violated the three neighboring countries' territorial integrity but added, "We do not accept any threats against us from the neighboring countries." Iran says it targeted a terrorist group's base in Syria, and an Israeli Mossad spy agency's espionage center in northern Iraq in response to terrorist attacks inside Iran. It also hit two bases of 'Jaish ul-Adl' terror outfit in Pakistan in retaliation for several attacks on Iranian soil in recent years. The move drew an angry reaction from Pakistan that reciprocated the attack, before it announced that the relations are back to normal. Brigadier General Ashtiani said Iran's priority is to inform the neighboring countries of the provocative moves by terror groups well in advance, adding the IRGC got militarily involved after the countries failed to take care of the threat posed against Iran. The defense minister argued that Iran's move was within the framework of international laws.

Iran-India Trade Up 21% in November 2023



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry in its latest report said the value of trade between Tehran and New Delhi increased by 21 percent in November 2023 compared to the same month in 2022. The trade exchange between the two countries reached \$191 million in November 2023, while the figure was reported to be \$158 million in the same month of the previous year. As reported, India's exports to Iran stood at \$132 million in November 2023, registering a growth of 30 percent compared to November 2022. Iranian exports to Iran in the mentioned month also reached \$59 million with a growth of five percent, year on year. In November 2022, India exported \$102 million of goods to Iran and imported \$56 million from the Islamic Republic. The two countries exchanged over \$1.6 billion of products in the first 11 months of 2023, 30 percent

less than the figure for the same period in 2022. Iran and India trade exchanges exceeded \$2.291 billion during January-November 2022, the report added. India exported \$1.021 billion worth of products to Iran in the first 11 months of 2023, registering a 40 percent decline compared to the same period of 2022. India had exported \$1.685 billion worth of products to Iran from January to November 2022. According to the ministry, India imported \$588 million worth of products from Iran between January and November 2023, while this Asian country had imported \$606 million worth of products from Iran in January-November 2022. Oil products were the major products imported by India from Iran in this period and rice was the top product imported by the Islamic Republic. Oilseed meal, fruits, and tea were also among India's top exported products to Iran during this period.

Italy Urged to Ease Visa Requirements for Iranian Businesspeople



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Hamed Asgari, the director of the international affairs of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), has underlined the need for Italy to ease visa requirements for Iranian businesspersons, especially truck drivers. He made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on Friday with Italy's commercial attaché in Iran Massimiliano Bertollo. Referring to the arbitrary Western sanctions on Tehran, he also stressed the need for finding solutions to the problems arising from the sanctions in trade with Italy. Asgari also noted that the low price of energy and workforce in Iran can be seen as a potential for Iran and Italy to make joint investments in producing a joint brand. He said that Iran's capability in producing mining products and Italy's know-how in processing mining products can be a proper ground for further cooperation between the two countries. The Italian diplomat, for his part, said that trade between Iran and Italy is on an upward trajectory despite problems in financial exchanges, transportation and logistics. Bertollo noted that the dispatch of Iranian trade delegations to Italy's 2024 exhibitions can provide a good chance for enhancement of bilateral trade.

Iran Begins Shipping Cargos to Russia Via Solyanka Port

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A consignment of Iranian exports, containing citrus fruit, was freighted by the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) to the Russian Federation via Solyanka Port corridor for the first time. The cold corridor of Solyanka Port in Russia's Caspian port city of Astrakhan has come into operation under a project financed by the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines. The port includes the necessary infrastructures for inspecting, sampling, and conducting tests for the customs clearance and the transfer of perishable goods stored in refrigerated containers in a completely hygienic environment. With the capacity to accommodate 40 refrigerated containers in its customs section, Solyanka corridor is expected

to boost Iran's exports to Russia, Mehr News Agency reported. On Friday, the first cargo of Iranian exports, including citrus fruit, was freighted from Amirabad Port in Iran's northern province of Mazandaran to Astrakhan in Russia. The Iran-controlled port of Solyanka is known as Iran's strategic base in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). The Khazar Sea Shipping Lines Company, affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, embarked on purchasing 53 percent of shares of "Astrakhanskiy Port" Company from the owner of Solyanka Port in 2010 aimed at easing shipment of cargoes. Solyanka is the largest port in the Astrakhan region, situated in the delta of the Volga River.



Iran Navy Enjoys Active Presence in Int'l Waters



TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani says despite the plots of the enemies, today the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy is active in the international and oceanic scenes. Addressing a ceremony for seeing off Navy's military flotilla to International and Oceanic Waters in the gathering of students of Imam Khomeini Maritime University on Friday, Irani described the mission of this flotilla in international waters as a multifaceted mission. Referring to foreign countries' requests for Iran's Navy to dock ships in those countries, he underlined that Iran's Navy presence in foreign countries and international waters is influential. The Iranian Navy commander noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran has now four military flotillas in the international waters at the same time.



Iran, Afghanistan Discuss Legal and Judicial Cooperation

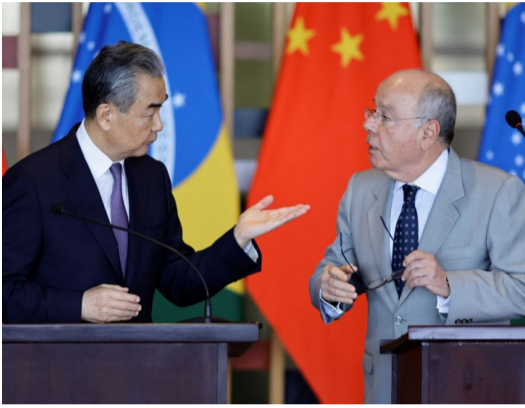
TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban ruling government Amir Khan Muttaqi have discussed issues of mutual interest in a meeting in the Afghan capital of Kabul. During the meeting which was held in the presence of the Iranian President's special envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the two sides discussed fighting terrorism and takfiri groups and the formation of a joint judicial committee to share Iran's judicial experiences with Afghanistan and to extradite prisoners. The Iranian delegation also met the head of the judicial council, the attorney general, and some members of the judicial council of Afghanistan during their stay in Kabul.

Seoul Police Chief Charged Over Deadly Halloween Crush

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Seoul's chief of police has been charged with professional negligence over the deadly 2022 Halloween crush that killed nearly 160 people, prosecutors in the South Korean capital said. On October 29, 2022, tens of thousands of people — mostly in their 20s and 30s — had been out to enjoy post-pandemic holiday celebrations in Seoul's Itaewon nightlife district. But the night turned deadly when people poured into a narrow, sloping alleyway between bars and clubs, the weight of their bodies and a lack of effective crowd control leaving more than 150 crushed to death. Kim Kwang-ho, head of the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, was charged with professional negligence resulting in injury or death. Seoul's Western District Prosecutors' Office said in a statement released Friday. As the chief of the SMPA, he "did not take necessary measures, such as deploying sufficient police forces and ensuring proper command and supervision" on the day of the crush, the statement said, although he was able to "foresee potential dangers arising" from overcrowding in the nightlife area. Kim, the highest-ranking police official to face trial over the tragedy, was charged without detention.



Brazil Backs Beijing's "One China Policy"



BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday welcomed Brazil's recent support for Beijing's "One China policy" that states Taiwan is an inseparable part of China, in a sign of stronger bilateral ties with South America's largest country. At the end of a two-day visit to Brazil, Wang made a stop in the northeastern Brazilian city of Fortaleza to meet Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at an air force base before departing to Jamaica by the late afternoon. There were no details of their meeting. In Brasilia earlier, Wang said that the two countries, both members of the BRICS group of leading emerging economies, must work together to build a multi-polar world based on peace and security. Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira said he and Wang discussed the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza and how they can be resolved, with China's top diplomat saying the two trade partners need to build closer levels of confidence. China-Brazil relations were ruffled during the far-right government of former President Jair Bolsonaro, and have improved under Lula, a popular leftist leader in his third term. Wang and Vieira signed a visa agreement between the two nations extending their validity from five to 10 years, aimed at spurring business travel and tourism. Wang stopped in Fortaleza en route to Jamaica, the last stop of his tour that began in African nations. Lula was traveling in northeast Brazil, his main political bastion, eyeing municipal elections this year. Brazil's position on Taiwan was established in April in a foreign ministry statement that expressed Brazil's "firm support to the One China Principle" and said China was "the sole legitimate government of the whole of China, and Taiwan being an inseparable part of the Chinese territory." China is Brazil's largest export market, mainly for soy and iron ore. Chinese companies are planning to increase their investments in Brazil, in power transmission, oil and electric vehicles, businessmen said at a Brazil-China meeting last week in Shenzhen with major Chinese corporations. Marcos Caramuru, a China watcher and former Brazilian ambassador in Beijing, said he is seeing growing interest of Chinese companies in investments in electric vehicles and in infrastructure in Brazil, as well as new investments in areas where China has been investing for a while, such as the electricity sector and e-commerce. "Lula as president has helped to increase the level of mutual confidence in Brazil-China relations," Caramuru said.

Israeli Drones Attack Hospital in Southern Gaza



GAZA (Dispatches) - The Palestinian Red Crescent accused Israel of firing yesterday at a hospital in Khan Younis, as a major advance in the main city in the southern Gaza Strip threatened the few healthcare facilities still open. The Red Crescent said displaced people were injured "due to intense gunfire from the Israeli drones targeting citizens at Al-Amal Hospital" as well as the rescue agency's base. The military said it was checking the report. Nearby in the same city, Israeli tanks were also approaching Gaza's biggest remaining functioning hospital, Nasser, where people reported hearing shellfire from the west. Residents also reported fierce gun battles to the south. Israel has launched a major new advance in Khan Younis this week to capture the city, which it says is now the primary base of the Hamas fighters who attacked Israeli towns on October 7, precipitating a war that has devastated the Gaza Strip. The Gaza health ministry said 142 Palestinians had been killed and 278 injured in Gaza in the past 24 hours, taking the death toll from more than three months of war there to 24,762. The World Health Organisation says most of the enclave's 36 hospitals have stopped working. Only 15 are partially functioning and those are operating at up to three times their capacity, without adequate fuel or medical supplies, it says. More than 1.7 million people — around 75 per cent of Gaza's population — are estimated to be displaced, many forced to move repeatedly, according to UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) figures. Many have sought refuge in tents that do little to protect them from the elements and disease. Among them, Mohammed al-Ghandour wanted to give his bride a beautiful wedding but they had to flee their homes in Gaza City and the couple finally got married this week in a tent city in Rafah, near the Egyptian border, where they now live. "My happiness is maybe at 3 per cent but will get myself ready for my wife. I want to make her happy," Ghandour said. While saying he was not shying away from the "human tragedy" inflicted on Gaza civilians, Israeli President Isaac Herzog cast the offensive as a step towards more peaceful relations with the Palestinians in the future, and bolstering global security, during his appearance at the World Economic Forum in Davos. In the north, where Israel says it has started

pulling out troops and shifting to smaller scale operations, 12 people were killed in Israeli strikes on a residential building near the largely non-functioning Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, Palestinian health officials said. An Israeli strike on a house in Al-Nusseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip killed five Palestinians, health officials said. Washington has had scant success in persuading its ally to alleviate the plight of the civilian population, deprived since October of regular aid and adequate medical care. Israel says it will fight on until Hamas is eradicated, an aim Palestinians call unachievable because of the group's structure and deep roots in an enclave it has run since 2007. Diplomats were dealing yesterday with the repercussions after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to rule out an independent Palestinian state, rejecting a long-standing pillar of US strategy in the Middle East. "Israel must have security control over the entire territory west of the Jordan River," Netanyahu told a briefing in Tel Aviv on Thursday. "It clashes with the principle of sovereignty, but what can you do?" US President Joe Biden spoke with Netanyahu yesterday, the White House said, without disclosing details of the call. White House spokesperson John Kirby later said Biden still believed in a two-state solution. "He recognises that's going to take a lot of hard work. It's going to take a lot of leadership there in the region," Kirby told reporters at a White House briefing. Biden's strong support so far for Israel has created friction with some members of his own Democratic party who are concerned over the war's steep toll on Palestinian civilians. Dozens of Biden's fellow Democrats signed a letter on Friday urging his administration to reaffirm that the United States strongly opposes "the forced and permanent displacement" of Palestinians from Gaza. Israel's onslaught on Gaza was triggered by Hamas attacks in which around 1,200 people were killed and 253 taken hostage, of whom about half are still in Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. In one of countless protests in Israel since Oct. 7 to push for action to secure the release of the hostages, some 200 women marched in Tel Aviv on Friday, including one pulled along in a cage. They chanted "Their time is running out, bring them back".

Macron Urges French Defense Firms to Boost Production to Support Ukraine



PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron urged defense manufacturers to boost production and innovation as Europe struggles to increase arms supplies to buttress Ukraine. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Macron has pushed the defense industry to switch to "war economy mode", reiterating his call during a visit to the Cherbourg naval base in northwestern France. "We must amplify the transformation we have begun" to respond more quickly to Ukraine's needs in its war against Russia, Macron said in his New Year's address to the French armed forces. "We can't let Russia think that it can win," Macron added, warning that "a Russian victory would mean the end of European security." "We must never again be satisfied with production deadlines that extend over several years," the president said. He said defense manufacturers were expected to ramp up speed and volume as well as innovate. Macron praised France's "high quality" weapons but stressed that the country had not produced or innovated enough in the past, the "comfortable years" that he said provoked "a form of self-satisfied numbness." "This world no longer allows that," he said. "Macron said some defense firms had been slow to understand "the importance of being able to deliver quickly" and had "over the last year and a half sometimes missed out on contracts, which I regret." On Thursday, Ukraine warned that its army faced a "very real and pressing" ammunition shortage. The European Union had promised to deliver one million shells by early 2024, but European Parliament lawmakers say only 300,000 have been delivered so far. A French Senate report published Wednesday said Paris and other European governments were "not up to the challenge" of meeting Ukraine's ammunition requirements. Last year France adopted a 413-billion-euro (\$450 billion) military budget for 2024-2030, its most significant spending increase in decades. Take international news everywhere with you! Download the France 24 app

Russian Oil Depot on Fire After Attempted Ukrainian Drone Attack



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Four oil tanks at a large storage facility in the town of Klinty in Russia's western Bryansk region caught fire after the military brought down a Ukrainian strike drone there, Alexander Bogomaz, the regional governor, said. Aided by a specialised firefighting train, firefighters tackled what he said was a serious blaze at the facility controlled by oil major Rosneft. Nobody was hurt in the attack, he added. "An aeroplane-style drone was brought down by the defence ministry using radio-electronic means. When the aerial target was destroyed, its munitions were dropped on the territory of the Klinty oil depot," Bogomaz wrote on the Telegram messaging app. He said air defence units had brought down two other Ukrainian drones on Friday over other parts of Bryansk, a region that borders Ukraine. Both Russia and Ukraine have targeted each other's energy infrastructure in strikes designed to disrupt supply lines and logistics and to demoralise their opponent as they try to get the edge in a nearly two-year war that shows no sign of ending. Bogomaz posted footage that showed firefighters directing water hoses at giant flames around the storage tanks, at least one of which looked to have been badly damaged, as thick smoke filled the air. Andriy Yusov, a spokesperson for Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency, neither confirmed nor denied Ukraine had been behind

the attack, but said "such events regularly occur at the aggressor state's military facilities". Yusov told national TV he expected the incident to complicate logistics for Russian troops, increasing Ukrainian forces' "room for manoeuvre". Several Ukrainian media, citing sources in the security services, said the GUR, which did not immediately reply to a request for comment, was behind the strike. A gunpowder factory in the Tambov region had also been targeted and the results of that strike effort were being clarified, the Ukrainska Pravda outlet quoted a source as saying. Russia's TASS state news agency said the fire at the oil depot covered an area of around 1,000 square metres with other reports saying it was getting bigger. Earlier on Friday, the Russian Defence Ministry said it had destroyed a Ukrainian drone in the skies over the Bryansk region, where authorities regularly report drone attacks from Ukraine. A Russian-appointed official said on Thursday Ukraine had tried and failed to target a Russian Baltic Sea oil terminal with a drone, in what appeared to be a rare attempt to strike a facility in St Petersburg. A Ukrainian government minister was quoted by the Interfax-Ukraine news agency on Thursday as saying that Ukraine had hit targets in St Petersburg using a domestically produced drone that flew 1,250 km (775 miles). Reuters could not independently verify the statements.



U.S. Wants Japanese Shipyards to Help Keep Warships Ready to Fight in Asia

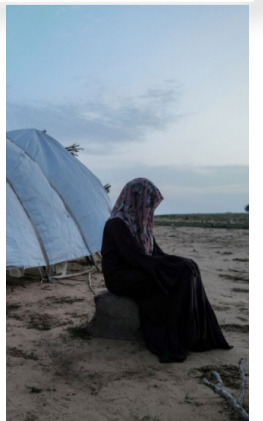
YOKOSUKA (Dispatches) - The United States and Japan are looking to make a deal for Japanese shipyards to regularly overhaul and maintain U.S. Navy warships so they can stay in Asian waters ready for any potential conflict, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said. "China watches what ships are coming in and out. It is not like this is a secret, they know what's happening. So therefore, they take an evaluation of your deterrence," Emanuel told reporters at the Yokosuka naval base near Tokyo. Unchallenged in Asian waters for decades, the U.S. Navy faces a growing Chinese navy being built in shipyards that are outpacing U.S. warship production. China has more than 370 ships and submarines, up from the 340 ships they had in 2023, according to an annual report, opens new tab released by the Pentagon in October, making it numerically the largest navy in the world. Using Japanese dry docks would ease pressure on U.S. yards that are wrestling with maintenance backlogs of up to 4,000 days and allow them to focus on shipbuilding that will allow the U.S. to expand its fleet, Emanuel said. Washington and Tokyo, he added, had established a council to work out a joint plan for the maintenance work. U.S. ally Japan hosts the biggest overseas concentration of U.S. military power, including the only forward-deployed carrier strike group, which operates from Yokosuka. That group of warships is part of the Seventh Fleet, which commands up to 70 ships and submarines from its headquarters at the Japanese naval base.

Ethnic Killings in One Sudan City Left Up to 15,000 Dead

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Between 10,000 and 15,000 people were killed in one city in Sudan's West Darfur region last year in ethnic violence by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied Arab militia, according to a United Nations report seen by Reuters yesterday. In the report to the UN Security Council, independent UN sanctions monitors attributed the toll in El Geneina to intelligence sources and contrasted it with the UN estimate that about 12,000 people have been killed across Sudan since war erupted on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese army and the RSF. The monitors also described as "credible" accusations that the United Arab Emirates had provided military support to the RSF "several times per week" via Amdjarass in northern Chad. A top Sudanese general accused the UAE in November of backing the RSF war effort. In a letter to the monitors, the UAE said 122 flights had delivered humanitarian aid to Amdjarass to help Sudanese fleeing the war. The United Nations says about 500,000 people have fled Sudan into eastern Chad, several hundred kilometres south of Amdjarass. Between April and June last year El Geneina experienced "intense violence," the monitors wrote, accusing the RSF and allies of targeting the ethnic African Masalit tribe in attacks that "may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity." The RSF has previously denied the accusations and said any of its soldiers found to be involved would face justice. The RSF did not immediately respond to a request for comment by Reuters. "The attacks were planned, coordinated, and executed by RSF and their allied Arab militias," the sanctions monitors wrote in their annual report to the 15-member Security Council. Reuters last year chronicled the ethnically targeted violence committed in West Darfur. In hundreds of interviews with Reuters, survivors described horrific scenes

of bloodletting in El Geneina and on the 30-kilometer (18 mile) route from the city to the border with Chad as people fled. The monitors' report included similar accounts. They said that between 14-17 June, some 12,000 people fled El Geneina on foot for Adre in Chad. The Masalit were the majority in El Geneina until the attacks forced their mass exodus. "When reaching RSF checkpoints women and men were separated, harassed, searched, robbed, and physically assaulted. RSF and allied militias indiscriminately shot hundreds of people in the legs to prevent them from fleeing," the monitors said. "Young men were particularly targeted and interrogated about their ethnicity. If identified as Masalit, many were summarily executed with a shot to the head. Women were physically and sexually assaulted. Indiscriminate shootings also injured and killed women and children," according to the report. Everyone who spoke to the monitors mentioned "many dead bodies along the road, including those of women, children and young men." The monitors also reported "widespread" conflict-related sexual violence committed by RSF and allied militia. The monitors said the RSF takeover of most of Darfur relied on three lines of support - Arab allied communities, dynamic and complex financial networks, and new military supply lines running through Chad, Libya, and South Sudan. The UN missions for Chad, Libya and South Sudan did not immediately respond to a request for comment. "Complex financial networks established by RSF before and during the war enabled it to acquire weapons, pay salaries, fund media campaigns, lobby, and buy the support of other political and armed groups," wrote the monitors, adding that the RSF used proceeds from its pre-war gold business to create a network of as many as 50 companies in several industries. Since the war started

"most of the gold which was previously exported to UAE, was now smuggled to Egypt," the monitors said. The new firepower acquired by the RSF "had a massive impact on the balance of forces, both in Darfur and other regions of Sudan," the report found. The RSF has recently made military gains, taking control of Wad Madani, one of Sudan's major cities, and consolidating its grip on the western region of Darfur. In December the United States formally designated that warring parties in Sudan committed war crimes and that the RSF and allied militias had also committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. The war has left nearly half of Sudan's 49 million people needing aid, while more than 7.5 million people have fled their homes — making Sudan the biggest displacement crisis globally — and hunger is rising. The sanctions monitors told the UN Security Council that "an excess of mediation tracks, the entrenched positions of the warring parties, and competing regional interests meant that these peace efforts had yet to stop the war, bring political settlement or address the humanitarian crisis."



De Minaur Aiming to Smash Through Barrier After Reaching Last 16

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Surviving home hope Alex De Minaur has his eyes on breaking through his fourth-round barrier for the first time at the Australian Open after reaching last 16 without losing set. The 10th seed crushed Italian qualifier Flavio Cobolli 6-3 6-3 6-1 to continue an impressive start to the season which included a win over Novak Djokovic at the United Cup. The 24-year-old is through to the fourth round for the third time in Melbourne but has never gone further, while his best-ever Grand Slam run was a quarter-final at the 2020 U.S. Open. Having been the lone Australian man to reach the third round this year, De Minaur is shouldering a nation's hopes. But he looks in the mood to make a deeper run. "First of all, I'll try to get a little bit better and beat my personal best, get to a quarter-finals," he told reporters. "That's the first step. I've made a couple fourth rounds in the past. I maybe have gotten to that point and not played the type of match I wanted to. I'm hoping I can break that barrier and go one further." None of De Minaur's matches so far have gone beyond two hours, leaving him fresh for his clash with tenacious Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev after he beat American Sebastian Korda to take his place in the fourth round. "I probably wasn't feeling the freshest I've been getting at this stage of the tournament. Obviously I got a little bit lucky with Milos (Raonic) pulling out (in the first round)," he said. "Therefore, the match wasn't too long. Then I played two straight-sets wins that weren't too long." "Physically I'm feeling great. Now it's just about giving all my energy for what's to come." The hard work starts now for De Minaur if he is to

finally make his mark at a Grand Slam after a rather underwhelming record so far in the majors. Meanwhile Novak Djokovic finally hit his stride at the Australian Open as he sent Argentine Tomas Etcheverry packing 6-3 6-3 7-6 (2) in the third round and marched into the second week of the tournament for the 16th time. The 10-times champion, who was dragged into dogfights in the first two rounds, gave a masterclass in clean and clinical tennis for two sets as he picked apart the 24-year-old Argentine in his 100th match at Melbourne Park. Etcheverry had seen off 36-year-old Andy Murray in the opening round and 37-year-old Gael Monfils in the second, but found the 36-year-old Djokovic an altogether different prospect. The 30th seed was unable to land a punch on the 24-times Grand Slam champion, who did not face a single break point, until a revival in the third set finally gave the crowd the contest they wanted. Djokovic, the top seed and reigning champion, clearly did not want to play a fourth set as he continues to struggle with a cold-like ailment and raced through the tiebreak and into the fourth round of a Grand Slam for the 63rd time. "It was the best performance during this tournament and obviously I'm pleased with how I played throughout the entire match, particularly in the first two sets," said the Serbian, who hit 34 winners over the match. "He stepped it up in the third set ... (but) in the tiebreaker I found the right shots, the right serves and closed it out in straight sets." The first week of a Grand Slam for top seeds is first of all about getting through against keen lower-ranked players looking to snatch the limelight with an upset.



Oldest Dakar Winner Sainz Takes His Fourth Title at 61



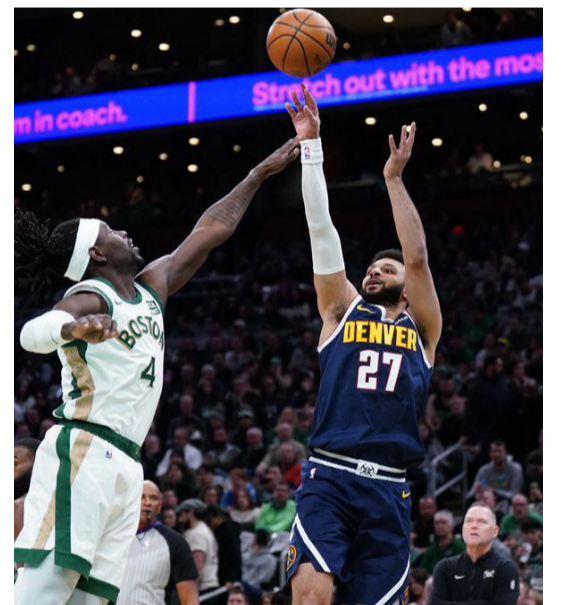
LONDON (Dispatches) - Spaniard Carlos Sainz extended his record as the oldest winner of the Dakar Rally with his fourth victory in the car category, and Audi's first, at the age of 61 and a year after breaking his back. Ferrari Formula One driver Carlos Sainz Jr was there to embrace his beaming "Matador" father as the two-week motorsport marathon reached the finish in Yanbu on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast. American Honda rider Ricky Brabec won the motorcycling category for the second time while Spaniard Cristina Gutierrez triumphed in the lightweight Challenger class to become only the second female to take a title after Germany's Jutta Kleinschmidt in 2001. Sainz finished one hour 20 minutes and 25 seconds ahead of Belgian debutant Guillaume de Mevius for Overdrive Toyota with France's Sebastien Loeb, a nine times world rally champion, third overall. Loeb had been Sainz's biggest rival until mechanical problems on Thursday but he wrapped up with a fifth stage win in his Bahrain Raid Xtreme team's Prodrive Hunter. Audi, now expected to focus on their Formula One entry in 2026, are the first to win with a car powered by an electric drive train. The Audi RS Q e-tron uses an energy converter, featuring a 2.0 litre four cylinder turbo engine, to charge the car's high-voltage battery while driving. "This car is so special, it's so difficult to manage, it has been so difficult to make it work ... I'm so happy for Audi," said Sainz, who held the lead from stage six after Saudi driver Yazeed Al-Rajhi crashed out. "To be here with my age and to stay at the level, you need to work a lot before. It's not coming just like that. It shows that when you work hard, normally it pays off," said the 1990 and 1992 world rally champion. "At the moment I want to enjoy this victory and I will think about my future in the next weeks and we will see." Sainz retired from last year's event after fracturing his T5 and T6 vertebrae in a crash. The Spaniard has now won the Dakar with four different manufacturers - Volkswagen in 2010, Peugeot in 2018 and Mini in 2020 - and held the previous record as the oldest winner at 57. He and co-driver Lucas Cruz did it this time without winning any of the individual stages but with the assistance of team mates Stephane Peterhansel and Mattias Ekstrom, who helped with spare tyres after going out of contention themselves.

Djokovic Admits Federer Tensions Early in Career

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic has opened up on how he riled Roger Federer when he broke onto the scene as a cocky upstart but said it only fired up his quest to become the best player in the world. The Serbian world number one is gunning for a historic 25th Grand Slam in Melbourne, where he has already won the title 10 times. Djokovic is already the most-decorated player in the men's game, with two more majors under his belt than the injured Rafael Nadal and four ahead of the retired Federer, fellow members of the so-called "Big Three". The 36-year-old enjoyed a storied rivalry with the Swiss great, winning 27 of the 50 matches they played. He is gunning for an 11th Australian Open in Melbourne to pull clear of Margaret Court, who also has 24 Grand Slam singles crowns. On Friday, Djokovic coasted past 30th-seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry in his 100th match at the tournament, looking close to his best after patchy performances in the opening two rounds. He was asked after his victory on Rod Laver Arena to reflect on his early career as he sought to challenge the established powers in the game. "I know certainly Federer didn't like the way I was behaving at the beginning," he said. "I think it didn't sit with him well. I don't know about the others. I guess I wasn't the favorite type of guy to some of the top guys because I was not afraid to say that I want to be the best player in the world. I was confident, and I felt like I have the game to back it up." But Djokovic, who faces French 20th seed Adrian Panatta in the last 16, said he never lacked respect. "Respect is something that I was taught that needs to be present regardless of what is happening," he said. "Obviously on the court a lot of things can happen in a kind of heat of a battle. It was a very long time ago now, 20 years since I made my first debut in the professional tour. It's really hard to say who liked me more or less." And the Serb gave an insight into what drives him, saying he was fuelled by what he perceived as unfair criticism. "If I made a mistake, I would admit it and, of course, say I make a mistake, I raise my hand, I apologise or whatever." But if the criticism came with no particular reason he thought, then I would just keep going in the kind of direction that I chose, and that's it. "I knew and I know today that you can't have everyone liking you, who you are, how you play, how you behave, what you talk about. It's normal. We're all different. We are all different preferences."



Nuggets Hand Celtics First Home Loss of Season



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jamal Murray scored a game-high 35 points and Nikola Jokic added 34 to help the Denver Nuggets hand the Boston Celtics their first home loss of the season with a 102-100 victory. Murray made 15 of 21 shots from the floor. He also had eight rebounds and five assists. Jokic finished with 12 rebounds and nine assists. Jayson Tatum missed a 17-foot jump shot that would have tied the score with three seconds to play. Denver came up with the rebound and ran out the clock. Boston entered the game 20-0 at home this season, and had won 27 straight home games dating back to last season. Derrick White led the Celtics with 24 points. Tatum finished with 22 and Kristaps Porzingis had 21. Porzingis, who scored Boston's first 11 points, was held to two points in the second half. Al Horford had 10 rebounds for Boston, which had its three-game winning streak end. The Celtics were 14-of-44 from beyond the 3-point arc. Jaylen Brown scored 13 points, but was 1-of-9 on 3-point attempts. Tatum was 1-of-8 on 3-pointers. The Celtics went on a 7-0 run to take a 98-95 lead with 4:51 to play, but Denver took the lead for good on a Jokic basket that put the Nuggets in front 99-98 with 3:36 remaining. Michael Porter Jr. finished with 13 points and eight rebounds and Aaron Gordon added 10 rebounds for Denver. Boston led 32-31 after one quarter, built a 12-point lead in the second and had a 61-55 advantage at halftime. Porzingis, Murray and Jokic each scored 19 in the first half. A Jokic 3-pointer put Denver in front 69-68 with seven minutes left in the third, but Boston responded with a 9-0 run to take a 77-69 lead. The Nuggets scored the final eight points in the third and trailed 82-81 entering the fourth. White scored 13 of Boston's 21 points in the third.

Salah Ruled out of Two AFCON Games

ABIDJAN (Dispatches) - Record seven-time champions Egypt were dealt a major blow on Friday as captain Mohamed Salah was ruled out of two Africa Cup of Nations games with a hamstring injury, while holders Senegal and Cape Verde qualified for the last 16. The Egyptian Football Association confirmed in a statement that Liverpool star Salah would not be able to return for his country unless they reach the quarter-finals at the tournament. The 31-year-old came off late in the first half of the Pharaohs' 2-2 draw with Ghana on Thursday. He will therefore sit out Monday's final group game against Cape Verde and any last-16 tie that would follow that. After drawing their opening two games, Egypt need to beat Cape Verde to be guaranteed of advancing in second place in Group B. That would tee up a last-16 tie in San-Pedro on January 28, while they could also potentially qualify as one of the best third-placed teams. Salah will therefore only feature again at the competition if Egypt make it to a quarter-final on February 2 or 3. Senegal, who beat Salah's Egypt on penalties in the final of the last AFCON, clinched a spot in the next round with one group game to spare thanks to a 3-1 win over Cameroon in Yamoussoukro. Ismaila Sarr of Marseille put the reigning champions ahead early on and later set up Habib Diallo to make it 2-0. Jean-Charles Castelletto pulled one back, but Senegal were not to be denied a convincing victory and talisman Sadio Mane put the outcome beyond doubt late on. Senegal have a maximum six points after two Group C matches, while Cameroon have only one and their hopes of advancing to the last 16 are in the balance. "I remember that in 2017 we lost to Cameroon in the quarter-finals, so during this match we did everything to win," said Marseille forward Sarr. Later on in Group C Guinea, again missing star striker Serhou Guirassy, beat Gambia 1-0 at the same venue thanks to Aguibou Camara's second-half goal. The result leaves Guinea second in the section on four points, meaning they need just a draw against Senegal in their next match to guarantee qualification for the last 16, while a victory will see them progress as group winners. Cameroon and Gambia

will meet each other next and can both hope to at least progress as one of the four best third-placed sides. Earlier, Cape Verde became the first team to qualify for the last 16 thanks to a convincing 3-0 win over Mozambique in Abidjan. Former Manchester United forward Bebe set the Atlantic Ocean island nation on their way with a remarkable first-half free-kick from 40 metres at the Felix Houphouet Boigny Stadium. Captain Ryan Mendes doubled their lead just after half-time and Kevin Pina wrapped up the win with a stunning strike midway through the second half. Cape Verde's biggest ever AFCON victory leaves them on six points from two games and means they are now certain to top Group B, after they beat Ghana 2-1 in their opening game. "I don't know how far we can go. Now we are into the last 16 and we just need to keep working as we have been," said Mendes. "We know it won't be easy but we believe in ourselves and in our work." Cape Verde already know they will stay in Abidjan for a last-16 tie against a third-placed team on January 29. Mozambique, appearing at their fifth Cup of Nations, have still never won a match in 14 attempts at the tournament. Meanwhile, Tanzania fired coach Adel Amrouche after he was banned for eight matches and fined \$10,000 over comments about Morocco, a Confederation of African Football (CAF) official told AFP. His dismissal was confirmed by the Tanzanian Football Federation with Hemed Suleiman promoted from assistant coach to caretaker boss for the rest of their AFCON campaign. The Group F outsiders lost 3-0 to Morocco on Wednesday and still have to play Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Before Amrouche was axed, a CAF official said "(the organisation) has suspended the coach for eight matches after comments he made about Moroccan officials in a TV interview." Algeria-born Amrouche alleged Moroccan officials within CAF decide who referees matches involving the senior men's national team, and at what time they kick off.

